

## **Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting Thursday, May 8, 2014, Preston Community Center**

Commissioners present: Nate Veranth, small forest landowner (Chair); Dick Ryon, North Bend resident; Rex Thompson, forester; Doug McClelland, Washington Department of Natural Resources; Sandy Miller, forest landowner; Bernie McKinney, forest landowner; Brandy Reed, King Conservation District; Matt Rourke, forester.

Staff: John Taylor, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD); Kathy Creahan, WLRD; Bill Loeber, WLRD; Sasha Shaw, Noxious Weed Control Program, WLRD; Christine Jensen, Council District 3.

Guests (all or part of the meeting): Dick Bonewits, Joan Bonewits, Bob Layton, Silvermoon, Julie Stangell, Jeff Madden, Lindy Friedlander, Barbara Powrie, Jane Potter, Bob Layton.

Chair Nate Veranth called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Minutes: Motion 1- 0514 That the minutes of the January 16, 2014 meeting be approved as corrected. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2- 0514 That the minutes of the March 13, 2014 meeting be approved as corrected. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Staff and Agency Reports and Announcement**

Dick Ryon – Dick offered a short statement of remembrance for the late Billy Frank, observing that Mr. Frank was involved in natural resource issues his entire life. Dick reflected that Mr. Frank was an articulate and persuasive person who did a lot of good and raised awareness of forests and fisheries.

Kathy Creahan –

*Administration:* Kathy provided updates on several administrative topics including a new state law requires training in the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act for Boards and Commissions. The commissioners chose to take the training online at their convenience rather than use time during the next commission meeting for training.

*King County Budget:* Kathy reported that the County had started planning for the next biennial budget in 2016. She said that she did not expect any changes in the Forestry Program or Rural Forest Commission budgets.

*Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (Act):* Kathy reported that Congress had reauthorized the Act for 2014, which made a modest amount of funding available for the County's Firewise program. She said that in recent years Congress has extended the Act on a year-to-year basis, so it is not known if funds will be available in 2015. She explained that the Act also brings money to the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest for projects that they would otherwise not have money for, including the RAC grant program.

### **Public Hearing regarding a proposed Forest Stewardship Planning Public Rule**

Bill Loeber, Forester, Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Bill Loeber opened a public hearing at 10 a.m. regarding proposed revisions to a public rule that establishes the format and requirements for developing a Forest Stewardship Plan, when the County requires such a plan. The participants had a number of questions regarding the relationship of the

County's current use taxation programs to state regulations, climate change impacts, and about concurrency between the County's public rule and those of other agencies.

Bill closed the hearing at 10:30 a.m.

### **King County Noxious Weed Program Update**

Sasha Shaw, King County Noxious Weed Control Program

Sasha provided an overview of noxious weed law in Washington State and its implementation in King County. She explained that reducing the impact of noxious weeds has always been a priority in this state because agriculture and timber industries are of economic importance.

Sasha said that under the law public and private landowners are responsible for controlling the noxious weeds on their respective properties. Noxious weed crews typically identify 12,000 infestations annually, over 90% of which are controlled successfully, she said.

Invasive plants have significant environmental impacts in forests, according to Sasha. They crowd out native plants and trees, and they reduce habitat value for wildlife, birds, and fish. Because weeds are such good competitors, they slow down forest regeneration by reducing the availability of resources for young trees, and they can reduce tree health and timber value, she said. Another economic impact is the cost of managing invasive weeds. Avoiding impacts to the forest while still getting good control of weeds is costly and labor-intensive, according to Sasha.

Sasha explained that the program is funded primarily by a per parcel fee, which is paid with property taxes. The County is considering changing the assessment, so if there were things the RFC would like to see this is a good year to suggest changes, she said.

### **King Conservation District Advisory Committee Update**

Sandy Miller, Commissioner

Sandy provided an update on the work of the King Conservation District (KCD) Advisory Committee, on which she serves as a representative of the Commission. She asked for input on prioritizing the six program areas that the 2014 KCD Task Force and Conservation Panel recommended for expanded KCD services.

There was an extensive discussion of the proposed expansion of services in the areas of assistance to small forest landowners and urban forestry, which would involve increasing from 14% FTE devoted to forestry to two fulltime positions, an Americorps intern, and additional cost share funding, Sandy explained. The goal of the program would be to promote forest health practices rather than commercial timber harvest. Comments from the Commission included:

- The KCD does not have a real forestry program right now. This proposal would make a start at addressing the need. By focusing on very small forests of 5 acres or less, the KCD will not overlap the services offered by King County.
- The proposed program could help educate small forest landowners about the need to be active stewards of their land.
- The proposed program could educate clusters of landowners about the benefits of coming together into a cooperative to manage projects as a group.

- The first three actions on the list are important: increased WSU Extension Coached Forest Stewardship courses, technical assistance for small lot forest landowners, and technical assistance to homeowner associations (HOA). HOA's are important and could include road associations, neighborhood associations or anywhere that a group enforces covenants.
- The highest priority is to educate adults and show them how their actions could affect their pocketbooks.
- Place more emphasis on direct marketing because it affects all of the proposed areas of work.
- Question: Have been any discussions about what the economic development effort would involve?
- Targeting HOAs with open space tracts is important. They are unlikely to manage open spaces on their own. Encouraging stewardship of large open space tracts like those at Snoqualmie Ridge would be a wise investment.
- Create informational tools to help neighbors work with neighbors on better ways to approach forest stewardship. The neighbor with forested land may not know the names of the plants on his land, much less how to protect them.

The consensus was that the Commission concurred with the six categories of potential additional services proposed in the Rural Small Lot Forestry and Urban Tree Canopy Enhancement section of the draft KCD program focus areas document.

### **Firewise Communities/USA 10th Anniversary Award to the Tolt Triangle Fire Council**

Chair Nate Veranth introduced Jeff Madden, Lindy Friedlander, and Barbara Powrie, who are members of the Tolt Triangle Fire Council Executive Committee. Jeff presented a short history of the Tolt Triangle community's involvement in the Firewise program. He said that after two significant wildfire incidents in 2003, the community worked with a King County Forester and Eastside Fire and Rescue to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan and enroll in the national Firewise Communities/USA recognition program.

Jeff explained that the Tolt Triangle Fire Council was the first recognized Firewise Community in the Washington DNR South Puget Sound region. He related that the community had undertaken many projects to promote Firewise and wildfire safety in the Carnation-Duvall area during the last 10 years. The group has developed an area atlas and evacuation guide, hosted Firewise workshops and walking tours, planted a 'firewise' garden at their fire station, and improved the health of over 900 forested acres by collaborating as neighbors to thin over 900 acres of overstocked forest to reduce fuels and improve forest health, said Jeff.

Next, Jane Potter, the Firewise representative for Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) stepped forward to present the Tolt Triangle Fire Council with an award for having achieved 10 consecutive years of recognition by the Firewise Communities/USA program. Jane pointed out that most people do not think of wildfire as a threat to western Washington communities, but in fact many areas like the Tolt River Highlands and Lake Joy communities, are located in wildfire hazard areas. Jane presented the award on behalf of Washington DNR and Firewise Communities/USA.

Christine Jensen, representing Councilmember Kathy Lambert, read of letter of congratulations from Councilmember Lambert to the Tolt Triangle Fire Council commending them on their collaboration as a community and on their accomplishment in making their community safer from wildfire.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

**Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on July 10, 2014, at the Preston Community Center.

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